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THE TRANSKEIAN TERRITORIES : THEIR PHYSICAL  
GEOGRAPHY AND ETHNOLOGY.

BY H. C. SCHUNKE.

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To know a country we must not alone have a knowledge of its geographical position and the rivers which drain it, but we must have a clear and distinct understanding of its relief ; it is, therefore, necessary in giving an account of the Transkeian Territories, or more properly called "*Kaffraria Proper*"—to begin with a description of the *Physical Structure*. The country extends from the *Indwe-Kei* to the Umzimkulu and Umtamvuna and from the Indian Ocean to the Drakensberg Range, or in other words from the Eastern Frontier Districts of the Cape Colony to Natal. It falls within 30° and 31° 40' of South Latitude. The direction of the coast line which is almost a straight one is from South-west to North-east. The country forms a section of the South African coast belt, *i.e.* it is situated between the main elevation of South Africa which ranges round the inland plateau and the sea. Its extent is 17,542 square miles. The main range in this part of South-East Africa attains a considerable altitude and comes into close proximity to the sea, reducing the coast belt to a narrow steeply inclined strip of land which rises in terraces. These terraces or steps are well defined and we are enabled to divide the country into three distinct parts, viz. : (1) A coast region ; (2) a first terrace which rises along its outer edge to over 1,500 feet above sea-level and which has an average altitude of 2,000 feet ; and (3) a second or upper terrace of an altitude exceeding 4,000 feet. The upper terrace stretches along

the base of the main range ; on its coast side it is bounded almost throughout by a secondary range of mountains which has an abrupt and steep incline towards the first and lower terrace. The outer edge of the first terrace, though well defined, is not bounded by a distinct range of mountains. The coast region is exceedingly rugged and broken ; from the border of the first terrace ridges incline towards the coast, and deep down, flanked often by high precipices on either side, the rivers flow in tortuous courses seawards. The scenery is pleasing, there is a wild and romantic alternation of swelling hills and deep gorges and of rolling grass-lands, forest and jungle. In width the coast-lands rarely exceed twenty miles. The first terrace is less rugged than the coast region, it presents the appearance of an open undulating grass country. As one approaches the upper terrace the land becomes however more mountainous, and where it is intersected by the larger rivers its valleys are deep and narrow with steep precipitous declivities. The scenery is on the whole less attractive.

The upper terrace is also undulatory in its nature, its scenery is delightful, the mountains towering above its level are grand and majestic, and in winter when covered with snow cannot be surpassed by anything in South Africa. The *Main range* is called the Drakensbergen or Kathlamba Mountains, and it continues under this name beyond East Griqualand as far as the Verzemelbergen on the North-Eastern boundary of Natal.

Its culminating points lie beyond our area, near the sources of the Tugela and Bushmans Rivers in Natal.

Near the sources of the Umzimvubu the range is almost one hundred miles distant from the coast, from there it extends for seventy miles south-west to the sources of the Tina River, thence for fifty-five miles south-west by south as far as the sources of the Inxu and Xuka Rivers ; in this part it rises boldly to a relative altitude of 4,000 feet above the upper terrace or to an altitude of over 8,000 feet above sea level. Many prominent peaks tower above the crest of this magnificent mountain range, such as the Twins, the Newton Peak, Mount Huxley, Benlmond or Snow Peak and the Kathlamba Peak. At the sources of the Xuka River the range—here but eighty-five miles distant from the coast—deflects and tends westwards for twenty-seven miles to the Washbank Peak and then southwards for seven miles to the Xalanga Peak near the sources of the Indwe River. From the sources of the Xuka the range falls

towards Barkly Pass, then rises again to Table Mountain and reaches an altitude of over 8,000 feet in the Washbank Peak. Westwards from here the main range is called the Stormbergen. The *secondary Range* of mountains, called by the Dutch-speaking population by the collective name of *Zuurbergen*, which marks the limit of the upper terrace on the coast side, is inferior in height to the Drakensbergen. Its average altitude is 5,000 feet. It is the continuation of the range known in the Frontier Districts as Great Winterberg, Katberg, Elandsberg, Amatola and Kologha. Proceeding from the Indwe in the direction of Natal it is known by the successive names : Lubizi, Gumakala, Untonhloni, Gutweni, Gulindota, Gaka, Baziya, Matnana, Umcano, Inziswa, Nolangeni and Ingeli Mountains. Between the Kei and Bashee Rivers covering a great portion of Fingoland and Idutywa an isolated plateau rises above the first terrace and reaches in its highest point an elevation of 3,600 feet ; it is cut off from the spurs of the Zuurbergen on the west side by the Kei and on the east side by the Umgwali-Bashee. For convenience sake we may call it the *Ncamakwe Plateau*, because its highest point is situated near the Ncamakwe Residency in Fingoland.

Few parts of South Africa are so well watered as Kaffraria Proper ; it is true the numerous perennial streams which intersect it are, strictly speaking, but mountain streams, none of which attain comparatively speaking great width or volume of water ; they are impetuous and swift and hurry much of the highly prized water into the ocean, before it can afford any benefit ; still, looked at from an African point of view water is plentiful, more abundant, in fact, than in any other part south of the Zambesi. We have divided the territory into three parts or belts according to their elevation. The rivers may be divided into three corresponding classes, viz. : Rivers which rise : 1, on the main range ; 2, on the Zuurbergen ; 3, below the edge of the last terrace, or into principal, secondary and coast rivers, with respective drainage areas of 19,304, 2,780 and 5,026 square miles. The principal rivers are represented by the Indwe, Kei, Bashee, St. John's and Umzimkulu. Of the first and last only portion of their drainage areas fall within our limits. Considering the drainage area and the amount of water carried to the sea the St. John's River ranks chief in order. In consequence of the undulating nature of the country the rivers of all three classes are exceedingly tortuous ; the proportion of the absolute length to the

direct distance measured from source to mouth ranges from 5 : 3 to 13 : 5. The mean proportion obtained from a considerable number of streams is 9 : 5.

#### DRAINAGE AREAS OF RIVERS.

##### *Principal Rivers.*

Great Kei River (portion of drainage area)	...	...	Sq. mls. 2,297
[Total drainage area of Kei River	...	7,520]	
Bashee	...	...	2,210
St. John's River or Umzimvubu	...	...	7,240
Umzimkulu (portion of drainage area)	...	...	918

##### *Secondary Rivers.*

Umtata	...	...	866
Umtamvuna (portion of drainage area)	...	...	430

##### *Coast Rivers.*

Group 1 between Kei and Bashee	...	...	984
„ 2 „ Bashee and Umtata	...	...	435
„ 3 „ Umtata and St. John's	...	...	746
„ 4 „ St. John's and Umtamvuna	...	...	1,416

The *coast line* between the Kei River and the Umtamvuna shows the characteristic features of the African coast—a distressing uniformity—in a strong degree; not a bay, not a bight is to be found along its whole length of sufficient depth to be of any account as a safe harbour. In a limited measure, the fine deep estuaries, near the river mouths, make good for this lamentable deficiency. They would afford excellent shelter even from the fiercest gales of the Indian Ocean, but that they have with but few exceptions the drawback of being obstructed by immense sandbanks. Not only that the rivers have too small a volume of water to throw out deposits seawards and to form anything resembling a delta, they do not even offer sufficient power of resistance to the mighty agency of the ocean which flings enormous masses of sand up their beds constituting the obstructing sand bars. The action of the sea current from the north-east, the returning eddy and the insignificant volume of the water of the rivers combined, form sandspits which extend from the western points of the river mouths obliquely up the river beds. The volume of water carried seawards determines the length of the sand-

spits. The bar at the Kei mouth is exceedingly small and the same is the case at the Umtata mouth, only there is a large rock in the midst of the channel at the latter, inside of which there is deep water. It is said this rock could with ease be removed by blasting. Without doubt the magnificent firth at the mouth of the St. John's River will become a large and important port. The drawback here is not so much the bar, for that shows a greater depth of water than the one at the Buffalo mouth, but the narrowness of the channel during the latter part of winter and autumn. Vessels of 60—100 tons go in and out at high water at all times of the year. The outer anchorage is well sheltered by Cape Hermes and is close to the bar. From the mouth upwards the beautiful river, which is in parts over 400 yards wide, is navigable for small craft for over 10 miles.

On the whole the *geological formation* of Kaffraria Proper may be said to be similar to that of Natal. Along the coast from St. John's River mouth to Natal there is a belt of quartzite sandstone; then there are belts of Ecca and Dwyka conglomerate. From the upper plateau right down to the base of the Zuurberg there is a mighty sandstone formation ranging vertically over more than 3,000 feet. It is interspersed with coal measures, the principal of which are found at an altitude of from 4,000 to 4,300 feet above sea level. The formation extends horizontally over the whole upper terrace from the Indwe to Natal and represents the principal coal region of the Cape Colony. Numerous dykes of eruptive rock extend from the main range across the upper plateau. At present very little is known of the existence of minerals and precious stones. Copper is found in insignificant quantities in the Zuurberg near Mount Ayliff and on the higher parts of Eastern Pondoland. Lead and silver have been found on the Tonti Range and Tabainkulu in Pondoland and in some parts of the coast land between St. John's River and the Bashee. Iron pyrites consisting of one half sulphur and one half iron are found in solid masses and in considerable quantity along the coast. East of St. John's River graphite is found on the seashore and near the Umtamvuna there is asbestos. There have been frequent reports of gold discoveries, such as at Ongeluks Nek and on the Umga River in the Maclear District. If the specimens were really found in those localities, which is as yet doubtful, they are of too insignificant value to warrant any expenditure of money.

There exists a strict relation between the geographical position, the direction and contour of the coastline and of the main elevation

and the linear distances from the coast of points of equal altitude and the *climate*. Our general knowledge of the climate of South-Eastern Africa and of the physical structure of Kaffraria Proper in special enables us, notwithstanding the scarcity of local observation, to arrive at an approximate solution of the meteorological problems which present themselves. We may presume that during summer the region of minimum barometric pressure in South Africa is situated in the Kalahari Desert and the prevailing winds in summer along the South-east coast blow therefore in that direction. The South-east winds bring rain. In winter the prevailing winds are from the North-west. This is entirely different from what takes place in South-West Africa where rains occur in winter and are brought by North-west and West winds. In Kaffraria the North-west winds in winter blow with great force sometimes to 9th and 10th degree of force, whereas the South-east winds in summer rarely exceed the 4th and 5th degree. Kaffraria is situated on the weather side of the main elevation, which latter like the coastline has a direction almost at right angles to the direction of the rain-bringing winds, and the country is therefore on the whole well supplied with rain. The greatest amount of rain falls along the Drakensberg and on the seacoast. It is equal to that of Southern Europe, averaging over thirty-two inches. The mean rainfall of the territory may be put down at about twenty-eight inches, which exceeds the rainfall of Southern Germany and is exactly that of the Colony of Victoria. Just opposite the part of the coast between the Bashee and St. John's Rivers the Drakensberg and Zuurberg attain their closest proximity to the coast. It is on the upper terrace in this part that the maximum rainfall is attained. During nearly the whole summer there is a steady rainfall which can always be depended upon and droughts are not known. One would think that in so narrow a coast belt as Kaffraria the South-east trade winds would blow from the coast to the main elevation throughout with unfailing regularity; but such is not the case. It is exceedingly interesting to notice the local modifications which are due to the relief of the country. The principal regions in which I have noticed such local disturbances of the normal climate are the Upper Umzimvubu or St. John's Basin and the Upper and Middle Kei Basin. In the latter the modification of climate is by far the more marked. The Basin is surrounded on all sides by high mountain ranges and plateaus, but what chiefly determines the character of its climate is the high Ncamakwe Plateau

which closes it on the south-east side, the side from which come the rain-bringing winds. Distinct cyclonic action round a point of minimum air pressure and in accordance with the law of gyration of Buys-Ballot is here observable. The winds instead of blowing from the south-east frequently gyrate from north-west through south to north-east, sometimes carrying heavy thunderclouds with them. Mr. Gamble in one of his papers on the climate of Southern Africa mentions these irregular winds which blow north of the Katberg and sweep along the northern slopes of the Amatola Mountains. He calls them "return trades" which considering they are entirely local would hardly be a correct appellation. It is due to these winds which blow in opposition to the regular South-east trade winds that the Kei Basin is sometimes subject to severe droughts. The upper terrace is cold in winter. There are heavy night frosts and snow falls frequently. The Drakensberg range has been seen covered with snow as early as March and as late as November. On the whole the climate of Kaffraria is exceedingly healthy and pleasant, and well adapted to a European population.

In intimate relation to the relief of the country and the climate with all its local modifications is the *flora*. The Botanical region to which Kaffraria belongs is the "Tropical African Region." The character of the vegetation is on the whole, like in Natal and the Frontier Districts, that of the Steppe. The country is covered to the very mountain tops with a dense growth of grass of varying height. The species of grasses are numerous and are popularly divided into "sweet" and "sour" kinds; the extent covered by the "sour" kinds, which are not so nutritious and desirable as pasture, is limited to the outer edge of the upper plateau (hence its name Zuurbergen) and patches of land along the foot of the main range. Nearly all the principal forest trees and arborescent shrubs of South-Eastern Africa exist in Kaffraria. Their distribution is entirely dependent on the relief of the country. The principal forests are found on the slopes of the Zuurberg, in the gorges of the outer-edge of the first terrace and along the sea coast. In the Drakensberg valleys forests are only found in the most secluded and sheltered nooks and corners. In delineating the main elevation of the country and the Zuurberg and the inland border of the coast lands on paper, we at the same time show the lines on which is found the principal forest vegetation.

Of the coast forests some are of enormous extent such as the Udwessa, the Manubi, and the Ekossa (or Egosa) forests. They abound in yellowwood, Cape teak, assegai-wood, white pear, Kafir boom, Kafir ironwood, Cape box, redwood, white ironwood, olive, wild plum, red pear, wild chestnut, Cape ash and sneezewood. The forests on the first terrace consist chiefly of yellowwood, stinkwood, ironwood, sneezewood, olive, red and white pear. The principal forests are the Untonhloni near the head of the Umgwali River, the Xwexweni, Gulindota and Myolo forests near the Bashee, the Tabandula in the Qumbu district and the Ingeli forest near the Natal border. The forests of the Drakensberg range consist principally of yellowwood. There is a great and remarkable scarcity of heaths and bulbous plants in Kaffraria as compared with the western part of South Africa. Along the rivers from the foot of the Zuurbergen to the seacoast, there is a plentiful growth of mimosa. Near the seacoast the mimosa is scattered over much of the undulating grass country. Along the lower courses of the larger rivers euphorbia and aloe are plentiful. The grand and beautiful forests combined with the peculiar configuration of the country lend to the scenery of Kaffraria its own characteristic physiognomy. The loveliest and most picturesque parts are found in the basin of the St. John's River. To give an idea of the nature of the scenery of the country it will suffice to describe the lower valley of this magnificent river, which description I take from a more elaborate treatise by me on the Physical Geography of that part of South Africa. Below the junction of the Caba with the St. John's River the scenery becomes grand and wild, the slopes of the ridges which close in the valley become thickly wooded, to the east the Tabainkulu stretches its steep bank range, densely clothed to the summit with dark primeval forest, away right down to the confluence of the Umzimvubu and Umzimhlava. Six to eight miles further down in this romantic valley the Umzimvubu (St. John's) receives from the west the powerful Tina River. The country which stretches now away on both sides of the river to the sea is the most beautiful part of the St. John's basin; it is asserted even that it ranks amongst the most lovely and picturesque parts of the globe. It is exceedingly rugged and broken, high ridges extend on either side of the valley right down to the coast, where they are abruptly chopped off and form two bold conspicuous headlands, a gateway through which the St. John's pours seawards. The valley presents the appearance of a vast chasm;

it is impossible to form any comprehension of the grand and wondrously wild and romantic scenery. The grandeur of the noble lofty hills clothed with the densest woods which overlook the enormous gap can hardly be surpassed. At every bend of the valley some new and striking feature meets the eye, now precipices rise steep and sheer to more than 1,000 feet above the surface of the water, sumptuously draped to their tops with dense bush, so that no glimpse of rock appears ; now forbidding cliffs lift their heads from out of the dark leafy deeps ; then pleasant grassy spurs slant down to the river side, with knobs—sometimes bush-topped—rising above their sharp ridges, and at the bottom of the valley the magnificent river winds steadily along in wide curves. It is a magnificent picture which the river presents with its bright, clear and deep reaches of water, overshadowed by gigantic walls and dark forest-tracts. Wherever you look the valley has a grand and imposing aspect.

Within the memory of living men Kaffraria abounded in *wild animals*, like most other parts of South Africa. It is not surprising that with a large influx of natives from one side and the arrival of the white man from the other the game should have become very scarce. The Upper Terrace, at one time called Nomansland, retained its riches in wild animals, especially of antelopes, until very lately. In the Drakensberg and Zuurbergen, as also along the precipitous valleys of the large rivers, several species of baboons are found and the forests of the coast region abound in monkeys. Of antelopes, the principal remaining species are the bushbuck in the forests, the rhebok on the mountain plateaus, the klipspringer in the Drakensberg, and the oribe on the undulating open grass country. Elands are only found still on the almost inaccessible part of the main range of the Drakensberg, between the Kenigha head and the sources of the Umzimvubu River. Elephants which were plentiful in the coast forests are now extinct. A few buffaloes are still supposed to exist in one of the Zuurberg forests ; hippopotami, about a dozen in all, are still found along the sea-coast in the marshy mouths of the smaller rivers between the Bashee and Port Grosvenor. The last lion in Kaffraria was seen in 1879 on the Hlankomo range, a spur of the Drakensberg, and one was killed, some two years before that, at the Ingeli. Leopards and several kinds of tiger-cats still abound in the Drakensberg, in the forests of the Zuurbergen and the coast region. Of birds and reptiles there are none, as far as the writer's

knowledge goes, peculiar to Kaffraria alone, and the *Fauna* is in this respect similar to that of the frontier districts and Natal.

At one time the whole of Kaffraria Proper was in possession of *Hottentots* and *Bushmen* tribes. It was about the time when the Dutch first founded the settlement in Table Bay that other and more powerful native tribes of a darker hue living to the north-east were driven from their original homes by unknown events and wandered south-westwards, gradually taking possession of a great part of the country of the *Hottentots*, leaving the higher and colder parts to the *Bushmen*. It would take too long to follow the movements of the different tribes even within the last generation.

The natives in Kaffraria Proper belong to-day chiefly to the *Bantu* family. The *Hottentots* and *Bushmen* still surviving are in such insignificant numbers that we need hardly mention them now. The *Bantu* are represented by the *Xosa* (consisting of *Gaika*, *Gcaleka*, *Ndhlambe* and *Bomvana*), *Tembu*, *Pondomise*, *Pondo*, *Baca* and *Xesibe*, *Basuto* Immigrants and *Fingoes*, consisting of numerous broken-up tribes. The population of natives may be roughly put down at over half a million, or at thirty to the square mile. Their distribution over the country is of varying density and is, especially where the disturbance and interference by the white man have been least, remarkably dependent on the configuration and geological formation of the country, which have determined the condition of climate, soil and vegetation. Especially in *Pondoland* this close relation is remarkably apparent. Although in *Pondoland* the average density of population is fifty to the square mile, there are large tracts of country almost entirely bare of inhabitants, whereas there are other parts which have a population of fully 100 to the square mile.

The mightiest of native nations was at one time that of the *Gcaleka*; the tribe is now broken up, and together with *Gaikas* from over the *Kei* its members are scattered over the whole coast country from the *Kei* to *Natal*. The Chief *Kreli*, who lives in *Bomvanaland*, has only 500 to 600 trusty followers with him at the present day. The *Bomvana* live along the coast between the *Bashee* and *Umtata* Rivers. The *Pondo*, divided into two sections, occupy the coast country from the *Umtata* River to *Natal*. Under the *Zuurbergen* and adjoining the *Pondo* country, proceeding from north-east to south-east as far as *Umtata*, we have the *Xesibe*, the *Baca*, and the *Podomise*. Another section of the *Baca* tribe is found in the *Umzimkulu* district near the *Natal* border. From the *Umtata* River

westward, as far as the Indwe-Kei we have the Tembu, divided into different sections under separate chiefs. Between the Bashee and Kei, there are Fingoland and the Idutywa Reserve. The latter is populated by Ndhlambe, Gcaleka and Fingoes. Along the coast between Kei and Bashee there are various locations made up of remnants of broken-up tribes. Apart from Fingoland the Fingoes occupy many valuable locations throughout the Transkeian territories. Under the Drakensberg there are settlements of Basuto and Hlubies.

There are very few parts in Kaffraria where the natives are still found in their original raw state, uninfluenced by civilization. These parts are far away from the ordinary trade routes, such as Gwadiso's Country, Bomvanaland, and the central coast region of Eastern Pondoland. There the ethnologist may still have an opportunity of studying native customs and ways of thinking. In many of their regulative arrangements, marital and filial especially, the heathen natives, although under the direct influence of civilization, show considerable conservatism. The customary relation between husband and wife, and between parents and children, has undergone very little or no change; even in cases when natives have become Christians these regulative arrangements, though not openly acknowledged, have been known to exist. Public and military arrangements such as formerly existed among all the tribes and now only exist in Pondoland, have now been either modified or abolished. Ceremonials, laws of intercourse, are also gradually undergoing change. In their manner of building and the kind of food used, the heathen natives have made very little change. In clothing, the skin karross has universally given way to the woollen blanket. A great improvement exists throughout in the manner of cultivating and in the reaping of crops; the number of ploughs used in the country in the place of the old Kafir hoe is enormous. Some influence on the native has been exercised by the white man in regard to his æsthetic and moral sentiments, knowledge and superstition, and even the language is undergoing some change.

It is impossible within the scope of this paper, which has already attained a greater length than the writer had anticipated, to enter into a detailed description of the natives in their raw and uninfluenced state; it is a subject which will be better treated in a separate paper which the writer proposes to write and which may be looked upon as a sequel to this one.